



GALACTIC COLLECTOR

The newest addition to the Star Wars universe has an unexpected numismatic connection.

This article contains spoilers from the Star Wars series *ANDOR*, which is available to stream on Disney+.

A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away, there was a numismatist...

You read that right—the newest installment in the Star Wars saga hinges on the actions of a dealer in coins and antiquities. Disney’s latest series, *Andor*, relates the origin story of eventual Rebel Alliance hero (and martyr) Cassian Andor. However, critics and fans seem to agree that the most compelling character is actually Luthen Rael—a revolutionary puppet-master who devotes his life to the destruction of Darth Vader’s employer, the Galactic Empire. Rael’s day job as a purveyor of historical objects provides him with an ideal cover for his travels throughout the galaxy and gives him ample reason to connect with powerful members of the Imperial Senate.

Played by Stellan Skarsgård, Rael is a refreshingly complicated addition to the Star Wars canon: he is deeply committed to a cause that is greater than himself. How-

ever, the path that his convictions have set him on is one that frequently requires him to ignore the moral compass that typically guides standard-issue Star Wars good guys. That’s not to say that he is amoral or a sociopath; he’s someone who has knowingly sacrificed his own peace of mind in the service of something that he hopes is more important than his conscience. When asked by another rebel spy about his sacrifice, he explains, “I’m condemned to use the tools of my enemy to defeat them. I burn my decency for someone else’s future. I burn my life to make a sunrise that I know I’ll never see.”

As the series progresses, Rael is revealed to be a key player in the formation of the Rebel Alliance—the same Rebel Alliance that Leia, Obi-Wan, Luke, and Han Solo will fight for in the original *Star Wars* trilogy—earning him a place among the most consequential characters in pop culture’s favorite franchise.

If you’ve made it this far, I’m guessing you’re wondering what any of this has to do with coins. Rael’s coin-dealing activities are

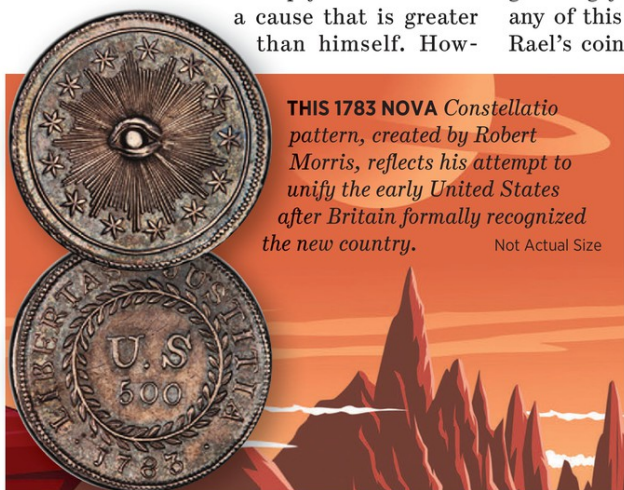
surrounded with this much history and not be humbled by the insignificance of our daily anxieties.”

On its face, his comment seems like a nod to escapism, and certainly, our hobby offers many of us a wonderful distraction from the daily grind. Yet, it’s hard to ignore the implication of Rael’s statement—the study of historical objects can also confer a sometimes unexpected and humbling perspective on the world and our place in it.

For me, this aspect of collecting has been an absolute blessing. Years spent studying the Nova Constellatio patterns has changed the way I see the Revolutionary War, the country that it gave rise to, and our place in it. These coins—struck immediately after news that Britain recognized American independence reached the United States—were Robert Morris’s attempt to unify the fragile confederation of states that its founder feared would be unable to maintain their independence as separate entities. Now, 240 years later, we are among the strongest nations the world has ever known, but we still struggle to maintain our unity, often due to the same tensions that the founders hoped to overcome after the Revolutionary War.

It is not hard to imagine that this sort of perspective is part of what drives a character like Rael, who clearly doesn’t believe that he’ll be the ultimate beneficiary of his own sacrifices. He’s the proverbial old man planting trees, the shade of which he will never enjoy. It’s nice to think that the writers of *Andor* used one of the greatest rewards of our hobby to illustrate the best part of such an interesting and complicated hero.

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THIS 1783 NOVA Constellatio pattern, created by Robert Morris, reflects his attempt to unify the early United States after Britain formally recognized the new country. Not Actual Size

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